



Memorandum

TO: RULES COMMITTEE**FROM:** Councilmember Pierluigi Oliverio**SUBJECT: AMENDMENT TO THE TREE AND
SIDEWALK HARDSHIP PROGRAM****DATE:** 09/19/13

Approved

Date

9-19-13

RECOMMENDATION

Request city staff consider on-going and/or unanticipated medical expenditures, not covered by insurance as a criterion to qualify for the Tree and Sidewalk Hardship Program.

BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS

Current law places the responsibility on the adjacent property owner to maintain and repair tree and sidewalks. However, the City of San Jose funds a low-income, senior, and handicapped hardship program which provides pruning, removal, and/or replacement services for damaged trees and sidewalks.

Approval of financial hardship assistance is limited to available funding and must qualify under the current annual income guidelines. This guideline is defined by the federal poverty level and does not take into account major life events. Major life events like catastrophic illness are often cited as the primary reason for home foreclosure and bankruptcy. The current city process does not take these massive financial burdens into account.

Applicants shall be required to submit supplemental documents (i.e. medical letters from doctors and medical bills not covered by insurance) that helps plead their case for financial hardship.

This information should be requested in addition to an income verification form. The current application process makes it an option for applicants to note special circumstances if they do not meet current income guidelines. Applicants that fail to complete the two parts of the application will not be eligible. Since the number of applicants typically exceeds the amount of available funding, the proposed amendment will create a narrower guideline when ranking an applicant's qualification status.